HEALTH AND SANITATION

S N I. Introduction

128 For the purposes of this section the region has been divided into three groups: (1) the Turkic people of Sinkiang (including the Eastern Turks, Kirghiz and Kazakhs), (2) the Tibetans of Chinghai and (3) the Chinese of the Northwest (including both Hans and Moslems).

S N 751 164 Measured by Western standards, the area as a whole lacks most modern facilities for maintaining high standards of health and sanitation. The shortage of trained personnel in the fields of medicine, dentistry and nursing is quite acute. These conditions may be due partly to the geographical location of the area, being in the deep hinterland, away from the center of China, and generally lacking a sufficient water supply. The common man's ignorance of the basic facts of health and sanitation contributes greatly to the spread of disease and to the lack of precautionary measures against the occurrence of certain diseases.

However, the local population, while living under what we consider unsanitary conditions, has built immunities to many diseases, to which a Westerner, living under the same conditions, would easily succumb. Some habits that we consider dangerous in spreading disease may actually be without any harmful consequences to the local people.

II. The Turkic Peoples of Sinkiang

S 262 563 A. The Diet of the Turkic People

The daily diet of the sedentary Eastern Turkis consists mostly of mutton and rice, with vegetables, both boiled and fried, including onions, potatoes, turnips, carrots and spinach, many forms of S [272] soups, and pilaus. Tea is the staple beverage, served with sugar [263] and without milk. Bread, in the shape of circular rolls indented at the top, constitutes an important item in the diet. A variety of fruits, including melons, apples, pears, apricots, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, plums, cherries, and mulberries, grow in profusion in Turkestan and are abundant during the summer.

S 264 262 184 565 563 [539] The common people eat only twice during the day; in the morning and in the evening. The wealthy people frequently have feasts and eat a great abundance and variety of foods. Many of them suffer from abnormal obesity as a result of overeating and lack of exercise. A common proverb in Sinkiang warning against the folly of this type of behavior is the following, "He who eats sparingly eats ten times, but he who eats too much eats but once."

S 563 262 [272] The diet of the Kirghiz and the Kazakhs, the nomadic Turks, differs somewhat from that of the sedentary Eastern Turks. Their diet is composed mainly of milk and mutton. From flour and

/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

the Chinese in the Northwest meets with several obstacles. The one most difficult to overcome is the lack of attitudinal uniformity due to a multitude of historical, environmental and social factors which have molded the people's behavior in the Northwest. There is, to begin with, the difference between the urban and the rural situation, which even though prevalent all over China, has made for a specially pronounced diversity in the Northwest. Generally speaking, in centers like Sian or Lanchou attitudes are met with which do not differ too much from those prevalent in other cities of China. It has to be taken into account, though, that Sian has been the capital of the Chinese Empire for centuries up to about one thousand years ago, and this fact still shapes certain attitudes of the citizens of Sian today. Lanchou, on the other hand, is most definitely a frontier city, the last major outpost of Chinese civilization with an ostentatious pride in local traditions and relics of a cultural or esthetic nature, but open,on the other hand, to a colorful mixture of influences coming from a variety of peoples beyond the pale. The urban attitudes prevalent in Sian and Lanchou thus differ perceptively and both cities differ in certain respects from other Chinese metropolises. Their peculiarities influence in turn urban-rural and social tensions in a specific way.

The Chinese rural scene, on the other hand, displays a variety of factors accounting for attitudinal diversity. There are the differences of the loess-cave dwellers and the mud-hut dwellers, those of the irrigational farmer and the one on hills or mountain slopes; there are regions of compact minorities or dominant majorities of Moslems and finally, regions along the few great thoroughfares and regions of remote seclusion.

The picture gains in complexity in the real frontier areas, Western Kansu, Chinghai and Sinkiang, where the Chinese constitute a minority. Here the diversity of peoples with whom the Chinese have contact, the geographical differences, the professional differences, differences of the duration of stay, of the home province of the settlers account for attitudinal patterns which change from settlement to settlement.

What is attempted in the following pages is, in view of the difficulties, and furthermore, in view of the pitifully scanty coverage of the area in the literature, to present a few samples of pertinent observations, which might add up to some general notions. In the selection, stress has been laid on the frontier regions, as the regions within the pale, reference still can be made to the General Handbook.

In their book, The Gobi Desert (New York, 1944), Mildred Cable and Francesca French describe the Chinese people's life in the fortress of Chia-yu-kuan in Western Kansu, which they visited in the thirties: "Inside of the fortress, life was divided into three distinct sections, each of which had an existence quite